The Sufficiency of Scripture, Pt. 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-18

As you know, we are studying 1 Timothy, but I have been hesitant in these next couple of Sundays to get back to 1 Timothy until all of our folks are back. We have many who are away over this particular holiday season. And so, I have postponed getting into chapter 2, which is a vital chapter, for at least a couple of weeks. Not only because of scheduling but also because of a second reason, and that is there has been something on my mind for the last month or so and it's sort of burning in my heart and I need to spend a couple of Lord's days just sharing my burden with you. And so, this morning and next Lord's day morning, I want to speak to you on the subject, "The sufficiency of Scripture...the sufficiency of Scripture." I really believe this is a vital vital subject. In fact, I trust that even after the messages have been given and you've heard them, you'll pick up the tapes because I think these are things that you will want to refer to again and again and give to other people. I'm not going to tell you my perspective on things, I'm not going to try to deal with the sufficiency of Scripture from a philosophical viewpoint, or an experiential one, but what I want to do is have us look together at the Word of God and see what it says about its own sufficiency. And as a church and as people whose lives are built upon the foundation of the Word of God, this is a very, very important study.

Now something in particular has triggered my interest in this study and I'd like to speak to that, if I might, for a few moments. There is, I believe, a strong and pervasive and somewhat subtle strategy unfolding today among those who call themselves "evangelical Christians." This is being masterminded by the arch enemy, Satan, and sadly being bought into by many many people in evangelical churches. This subtle strong strategy basically is an attack on the sufficiency of the Word of God. Now in all times and seasons, the Word of God is under attack. And we have to be somewhat careful and somewhat wary and somewhat watchful to discern how it's being attacked. I believe presently the attack on Scripture is primarily coming from those who deny its sufficiency for all matters of faith and conduct. One of the great statements of theology, of traditional evangelical theology is that the Scripture is adequate for all matters of faith and conduct. That is being attacked today.

Let me briefly describe what I mean by that with some illustrations from various angles. First of all, in the last few years in the church, there has grown to be among church leaders a great preoccupation with what I would call "worldly management technique." With all of the books being written on successful corporations and successful styles of management and leadership and so forth, the church has perked up its ears and gone after that really as if it were the very life of the church. There are many who bow, as it were, to the gods of worldly management technique. Churches are learning

those kinds of methods as if they were the keys to building the Kingdom of God. And in a very subtle way, this is an attack on the adequacy of Scripture, as if to say, "Knowing the Word of God and understanding its principles and the principles taught therein related to the growth of the church is not adequate and we must go to the management techniques and the systems of success the world uses in its corporate environment and transfer those to the church if we want the church to really grow and develop." I believe this is a subtle attack on the sufficiency of the revelation of God for the matter of the growth and development of the church.

Secondly, another angle that I've been recently concerned about is that there are many people who feel the Scripture is not a sufficient diet for the saints of the church and there must be along with it a certain amount of entertainment. And churches are spending a lot of money to entertain people. We have developed because of our penchant for entertainment in our society a sort of a Christian celebrity list. We are heavy into entertainment which is costing the church when you include Christian TV entertainment, billions and billions of dollars of the Lord's money. And it is, in a sense, a concession to those people who do not believe that the teaching and the study and the learning and the application of the Word of God is an exciting enough diet. In fact, there are many people who seem rather bored with the things of God revealed in Scripture and are really in desperate need of some entertainment. And there is in that, I believe, an attack on the sufficiency of the Word of God to bring to the life of believers all that is needed not only for the matter of spiritual battle but for the matter of joy and fulfillment in life.

Another area of great distress to me is the area of, I suppose what we could call, mysticism, or the occult. I believe in evangelicalism, if you look closely and you'll hear more of this on Tuesday night when you hear from Dave Hunt, but I believe if you look closely at evangelicalism today, you will find in many places people becoming preoccupied with the occult. They don't think that's what it is, but in fact that is indeed what it is. They are reaching into the world of mediums and demon spirits and the devil himself because they are searching for supernatural power, supernatural experience, ecstatic experiences. They are searching for miracles and signs and wonders. There are schools now teaching courses in signs and wonders. There are people saying that we can never reach the world with the gospel unless we can raise the dead and heal the sick and call down fire from heaven and do all kinds of supernatural things. Peter Wagner recently said at the American Association of Bible Colleges Convention, quote: "The simple gospel is no longer adequate without signs and wonders," end quote. We cannot reach the world, he is saying, with just the Word of God. We have to have signs and wonders and he is talking, along with many others, about finding the power source and delving into supernatural powers to do miracles and create these signs and wonders.

There are those who are today advocating Christian mantras, a chanting kind of thing. There are those offering formulas for confronting Satan, formulas for dealing with demons, positive confession and visualization techniques where you sort of visualize something as a reality, whether it's your healing, your new car or the girl you want, a new house, or reaching a certain group for Christ, or

developing a ministry, you get into this heavy kind of self-hypnotic visualization technique. These kinds of things are all forms of occult magic. They are being practiced to gain supposed divine power but the power they gain is the power of the enemy.

In fact, this could be called "the new religious science." We have now developed an evangelical science of the mind. Many of the people are getting into Eastern and Hindu thought thinking they're...they'll be able to capture the power of the Eastern world if they can get themselves into the paradigm of their kind of thinking. There's a preoccupation with this mysticism. Psychic power is cultivated. People are claiming authority over the devil, authority over demons, authority over disease. They're going around in the name of some supposed psychic power commanding not only Satan and his forces but disease, sickness, negative circumstances and other things.

Further, another category in which we see this kind of abandonment of the belief of biblical sufficiency is in the matter of marriage and family, for one. There was a time when we believed that the Bible gave us adequate insight into marriage and the family. That if we studied the Word of God, we would be able to live life in the family to its fullest, that marriage could be all that God ever intended if lived by biblical principles. Families can be all that God ever intended if lived by biblical principles but now there is a proliferation of tricks and gimmicks and sex techniques and just a plethora of things that are added to the Scripture to try to deal with family problems. And in an underlying and subtle way, they are making the comment that the Bible is to one degree or another insufficient or inadequate.

It used to be that we could accept what the Bible said in sociological areas, whether it's homosexuality or the role of a woman. Now we're hearing that the Bible is rather unsophisticated and cannot comment on these contemporary sociological issues because of its lack of sophistication. And so there is an insufficiency in the Bible's ability to deal with contemporary sociological phenomena. This is coming on a wholesale level into the church, particularly marked in the area in the liberal church homosexuality, in the more evangelical church in the redefining of the role of women away from the traditional biblical teaching.

But perhaps as dominant or more dominant than any of these themes is this area of psychology. Psychology today is making inroads into the church that really are frightening. In fact, there is in the evangelical church what is fast becoming a wholesale exodus from the traditional land of biblical theology into the new promised land of psychology and psychotherapy. Churches that once and for always would hire pastors and evangelists and teachers are now hiring psychologists. Pastors that once would go to seminary and learn the Word of God or Bible college and master the Scripture are now going to schools of psychology to study human wisdom in dealing with the problems of mankind. This again is a subtle way of saying the Bible is insufficient. When coming to grips with these deep seated emotional anxieties of man, we cannot expect the Bible to speak in any sophisticated way to those problems. Seminaries are changing their curriculum dramatically. For the first time in the history of the church, seminaries are hiring psychologists on their staff to teach, psychiatrists to teach, they're

teaching psychology, they're adding more psychology courses in many places, diminishing the biblical content of their curriculum. Colleges are doing the same thing. Churches are doing it. It's a wholesale exodus.

And to this sort of encroaching mysticism and preoccupation with supernatural powers and science of the mind and visualization techniques and hypnosis and all of this self-image stuff comes this psychology and together it is creating the new God of the church. And I can look back to our own law suit where we were literally mocked for being so primitive as to assume that the Bible could give people help when they had severe problems. The world has been saying the Bible cannot help and now sad to say, the church is chiming in and agreeing that the Bible is inadequate to deal with psychological problems. In fact, I would go so far as to say there are many advocating today a psychological salvation in place of the new birth. There is nothing in this more than a pseudo-evangelical humanism. This preoccupation with self-esteem and self-love and self-fulfillment and self-actualization that psychology has brought into the church knows no biblical counterpart.

And just to put things in perspective, the church inevitably...inevitably, buys into these things and in fact, the world will more readily admit the error of these things often than we will. For example, in the Los Angeles Times on the eighteenth of this month, you perhaps read an interesting article about a recent convention of psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and psychologists in Phoenix, Arizona, the largest convention, 7,000 people apparently attended. And for the first time in the history of the world, the leading psychoanalysts, psychologists, and psychiatrists of the world got together. Men like Carl Rogers, Albert Ellis, R.D. Lang, Bruno Bettelheim, Joseph Wolpe, and Thomas Szasz, those are the most famous names in the world in terms of techniques and methods of psychotherapy. They were all there.

And the article was really amazing. It said, for example, "The heroes were there to evaluate where psychotherapy has come in 100 years and where it might be going." Except, they really couldn't agree on either. Lang, one of the famous ones, known for his work on schizophrenia said, "He couldn't think of any fundamental insights into relations between human beings that had resulted from a century of psychotherapy." He couldn't think of any? The 7,000 practicing and student psychotherapist, psychiatrist and social workers who attended various sessions were undaunted by the debates and differences of opinion. Obtaining autographs was the priority for many.

One of these leading psychoanalysts said, "The best therapy he had found for his anxiety was to hum a tune." And the sad thing about that is that the church has bought into that as if it is the savior of man. Richard Feynman said, quote: "Psychoanalysis is not a science." What did he mean by that? He meant that there are no rules to guide it, it's a whole lot of human opinion. New York University professor, Paul Vitz criticized Christianity and he criticized the Christian church for its tendency to do what he called "buying high and selling low" in regard to social science. He said, "The church is eager to adopt popular trends of thought at the very time the secular professionals are beginning to criticize

them." In fact, he put it this way, "It is a matter of climbing on the bandwagon just about the time it's slowing down," end quote.

We tend to do that, to jump into movements that are just about dead because they have proven a washout even to the people in the world who started them. But here we have in our contemporary Christian church, these things making tremendous inroads. I am absolutely amazed at the inroads of mysticism, science of the mind, occultism, psychology and these other things into the church, the college, the seminary environment and the pooh-poohing of biblical theology and biblical sufficiency.

Now all of this, I believe, is not some small problem. I believe it is a serious and sinful view of the Word of God. I believe it is the sin of the church to believe the Bible to be inadequate. J.I. Packer in his little book on the Word of God puts his finger on the problem in a paragraph that says this: quote: "Certainty about the great issues of Christian faith and conduct is lacking all along the line. The outside observer sees us as staggering on from a gimmick to gimmick and stunt to stunt like so many drunks in a fog, not knowing at all where we are or which way we should be going. Preaching is hazy. Heads are muddled, hearts fret, doubts drain strength, uncertainty paralyzes action. Unlike the first-century Christians who in three centuries won the Roman world and those later Christians who pioneered the Reformation and the Puritan awakening and the evangelical revival and the great missionary movement of the last century, we lack certainty," end quote.

And the reason we lack certainty is because we have a sinful view of Scripture. We do not any longer seem to believe that the Bible is sufficient for the life and conduct of the church. That is a sin...a sin of monstrous proportions, to deny the sufficiency of the Word of God.

Now how can we answer this? How can we come at this? And I could take another couple of hours to delineate to you the problem, but I want to deal with the solution. You'll hear more about the problem on Tuesday night. But can we go to the Bible and find in it that which is sufficient for all of life and conduct? And the answer, I believe, is a resounding yes. And the proof is the testimony of the greatest authority in the universe, none other than God Himself. And what I want you to see today and next Lord's day is God's own testimony to the sufficiency of the Word of God. Now we're going to set our attention next Lord's day on one single passage and that will be Psalm 19. But...and I think that's the single greatest passage on the sufficiency of Scripture in all of the Bible, but this morning, I want us to simply look at a myriad of passages that will strengthen our understanding of this vital truth.

Now I'm going to give you a lot of Bible passages, I don't expect you to look them up. But this is very, very important and very foundational. So I want you to at least write them down and be sure you get the tapes so you'll have them for future reference. But don't try to follow me in looking them all up, you might get lost. I'll tell you the ones that are important to turn to.

A good starting place to give us a sort of a general feeling of what we want to get into would be in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. And I want to mention one verse to you and quote it and then I want to comment on it. Second Corinthians 3:5...2 Corinthians 3:5, listen to what it says, very short so listen carefully: "Our sufficiency is from God." Did you hear that? "Our sufficiency is from God." Now we could preach off of just that statement at great length. Our sufficiency is not from men. Our sufficiency is not from human wisdom. Our sufficiency is not from human resources. Our sufficiency is from God. Our sufficiency...what does that mean? That means our capability of living life in God's plan to the maximum is from Him.

In other words, we--because we are Christians--live in an environment in which the resources for life are divine. Okay? They're divine. We live at a sphere, at a strata, at a level which human wisdom does not feed...for which human wisdom cannot provide resources. Now I want you to understand in what I say this morning that I am not saying that there's nothing outside the Bible that has any value. There are many things that have value. God's common grace, that is the grace of God on all men, will create certain things in our human environment that are very helpful. But when it comes to the matters of spiritual life, all we need to know is revealed in the Word of the living God and ministered to us by the Spirit through that Word. And outside the Word of God we do not have to look for a sufficiency that is not provided in the Scripture. That is the sin. It is not to say that there's nothing in the world that isn't helpful. There are many helpful things in the world. But those matters which have to do with spiritual life and conduct and ministry are in the Word of the living God and they are sufficient...they are sufficient. Our sufficiency as believers is from God.

So we don't say, "Well, this is a problem that we can't handle...Oh, this...boy, you've got a spiritual problem the Bible doesn't deal with, you better...you better find some power source out there, you better get into sort of actualization or visualization or psychotherapy or psychoanalysis or, boy, we just can't handle this one." If it is a spiritual issue, if it has to do with the life of a believer, if it has to do with the life of the church, if it has to do with the soul of man, the struggles of man, those things that are in his life that bring difficulty, the Bible can deal with those things and does, it is sufficient.

Another verse in 2 Corinthians is in chapter 9, in fact it's parts of two verses, verses 8 and 10. Second Corinthians 9:8 says, and listen to this, just listen to what I say carefully and I want you to mark in your mind the superlatives..the superlatives. In fact, why don't you open your Bible to 2 Corinthians 9:8 so you can underline them. Watch the superlatives here...2 Corinthians 9:8. "And God," and there again is our sufficiency, God is our sufficiency, He is our source, "God is able," there are no limits on His ability, "to make all grace," now there's the first superlative, "all grace," not just some grace, not just most grace but all grace. "He is able to make ALL grace ABOUND" there's another superlative, another word that speaks of a superlative indulgence. "He is able to make ALL grace ABOUND toward you that you...here's another superlative...ALWAYS," not sometimes, not most of the time but all the time, "will have ALL sufficiency," there's another superlative, "will have ALL sufficiency," not in

some things, a few things, or most things, but in what?..."in ALL things."

I mean, it's an absolutely amazing statement. And anybody who goes around saying, "Well, you know, the simple gospel just isn't enough. The Word of God isn't enough. I've got to have this and this philosophy and this human wisdom and this approach," doesn't understand that that is a sin against the claim of God Himself to be able to make ALL grace ABOUND toward you so that you ALWAYS have ALL sufficiency in ALL things, and again, you will ABOUND, another superlative, and here comes another one, to EVERY good work, or to ALL good works. Absolutely unlimited superlatives.

And then verse 10 adds, "Being enriched in ALL things, or in EVERY thing to...here it comes again...ALL bountifulness which causes us thanksgiving to God, causes us to give thanksgiving to God." The superlatives here are staggering, absolutely staggering.

Now when somebody comes along and says the Bible is just not sufficient...boy, this is an issue the Scripture can't deal with. "Well, the Scripture can't go into that culture, boy, we've got to have some kind of supernatural power, boy, the Scripture's not adequate." or when somebody says, "Well, we just don't have the answers in Christianity for those deeper kind of problems," we fly in the face of the testimony of God in this very passage itself. Our God is able to provide the resources for all our needs. Our sufficiency then begins with God and God is sufficient.

Now let's widen our understanding of that basic idea that God is sufficient and that our resources have to come from Him. I believe that the resources God gives to us come through the Spirit of God and the Word of God. And the focus particularly today is on the Word of God. And let's listen to some of the testimony of Scripture as we consider this thought.

First of all, and just listen carefully and jot down the Scriptures so you can refer to them, when Jesus spoke of the total sanctification of a believer, that is the full holiness of a believer, the full separation from sin, He said this to His Father in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Thy truth." Now the word "sanctify" means "set apart from sin, holy, separated unto God." It has the idea of spiritual perfection...spiritual completion, that which we should be in Christ, coming to fulfillment. And He says, "O God, make them pure, make them holy, set them apart from sin unto Yourself and do it by Your truth." Then He says in the same verse, "Thy Word is truth."

We conclude then, very obviously, that the full holiness of the believer is the work of the Word of God, it is the work of the Word of God. It is not the Word of God plus something else, that's cultic. That's what the cults have been saying for years...you need the Word of God plus Mary Baker Eddy and the Science and Health and Key to the Scriptures. You need the Word of God plus the visions of Joseph Smith and the writings of Brigham Young, etc., etc. You need the Word of God plus the edits of the church and so forth and so on through all the years of the Roman Catholic Church. You need the Bible plus the writings of this person or that person. You need the Bible plus human wisdom and

philosophy. It's an age-old kind of thing, striking a blow at the sufficiency of Scripture. But, Jesus said, "Make them perfect and pure by Your truth, Your Word is truth...Your Word is truth." The full holiness of the believer is the work of the Word of God.

Listen to the testimony of the prophet Micah. Micah, the prophet, in chapter 2 and verse 7 speaks of the work of the Word of God in the life of a saint. And he says this very, very important statement: "Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" In other words, God speaking through the prophet says, "Is it not true that when you live an obedient life, My Word produces good in your life?" Or blessing in your life would be another way to say it. The point is that the Word of God is the source of the goodness of life. The Word of God is the source of benefit to an obedient believer who walks uprightly. The Word of God brings us all the good that God can dispense as we walk in obedience to that Word.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, we looked earlier at the second letter, the first letter also has a very important chapter along this theme and it's chapter 2. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he wrote to them that the Spirit of God revealed the teaching of God to them. And he described it this way in 1 Corinthians 2:13, he said, "The teaching of God that comes to us by the Holy Spirit comes...listen, quote..."not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." Marvelous. The wisdom of God comes to us not through human sources. Our sufficiency is of God. God dispenses His wisdom to us by the Spirit of God, revealing His teaching in the Word of God and it is the wisdom not in the words which man teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches. In fact, it is so comprehensive, it is so effective, it is so complete, he says in verse 15 that by that Word of God through the Holy Spirit, we can judge or appraise and evaluate all things. Tremendously comprehensive statement. We can judge and appraise and evaluate and understand and comprehend everything based upon the knowledge of the Word of God. "For...he says...the Scripture, the revealed Word of God...in verse 16, marvelous statement...gives us...listen to this...the mind of Christ." Did you get that? The mind of Christ.

Now is there any insufficiency in the mind of Christ? Is Christ limited? He knows a few things but He's also learning from some people? Not hardly. The mind of Christ is the consummate mind of God. The mind of Christ is omniscient. The mind of Christ is supreme. The mind of Christ knows no insufficiency. Paul says we have a word from God, a word not in the way that man teaches but taught by the Spirit of God, that word from God allows us to judge, evaluate, appraise, understand, comprehend and reason all things. Why? Because it brings to us the mind of Christ. And listen to me, beloved, the mind of Christ is a sufficient mind. Can there be more sufficiency than the mind of Christ? No, there cannot be. All we need to understand is the mind of God about any problem, about any need, about any issue. All we need to understand is how does God see it, how does God think about it, what does God say about it and that suffices us.

In Mark chapter 12 and verse 24, Jesus affirmed a very important thing. In a sort of a back-handed way, Jesus said that to know the Scripture is to experience...here's the quote..."The power of God." Jesus was saying, to know the Scripture is to experience the power of God. Now listen, people say they want power, they say we can't just give out the Bible, it doesn't have enough power, we've got to do signs and wonders. They say we can't just expect to live the Bible, we've got to have a certain supernatural power over demons and power over the devil and power over disease and power over this and we've got to be binding that and binding this and calling on this and calling on that and demanding this and demanding that and sort of with this kind of mind controlling our environment. But the Scripture says that to know the Scripture is to experience the power of God.

When Jesus went to deal with the devil, when the devil came to tempt Jesus up on the mount, and the devil tempted Him, what did He do? How did Jesus handle Satan? Did He say, "Ah, I bind you...I condemn you...I send you to the pit?" Did He give him some kind of formula like that? How did He deal with the devil? Very simple, He dealt with him on three different temptations and in every case He did what? He said, "It is written..." There's the formula. The power of God was expressed in the Word of God and when those three temptations were over, the Bible says the devil left Him...the devil left Him and the angels came and ministered to Him.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

The power is not in some mystical mind control, the power is in the Word of God. When you speak the Word of God, when you live by the Word of God, when you believe the Word of God, there is sufficiency there. The power of God to deal with any need comes from the Word of God energized in the believer by the Holy Spirit.

Now think about another familiar passage that speaks to the same issue in Hebrews, a very familiar one, Hebrews 4:12. Let me remind you of what it says. "For the Word of God is living and effective, or active, and sharper than any two-edged sword." You talk about a weapon, I'll tell you, the greatest weapon there is is the Word of God. It's sharper than any other weapon. That's what the writer is saying. There's no weapon like the Word...no weapon. It pierces as far as the dividing of soul and spirit. In other words, it gets way down in to the heart and soul and nature of a person. Is able not only to reach as far as a division of soul and spirit, but of joints and marrow and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

People say, "Oh, boy, that's such a deep problem. You better go into psychotherapy. Boy, that's such a deep problem, you better go over here to this person who has a ministry of binding the devil and get those demons out of you. Oh, that's a real deep problem, that's too much for us. We better send you off to some clinic somewhere. You better get into a different environment because we can't handle

that." Listen, the Word of God is living, it's active, it's powerful, it's sharper than any other weapon and it will go deeper and cut cleaner and truer than anything that exists to reveal the deepest thoughts and intentions of the human heart...so that verse 13 says, "All things are open and laid bare." It will do what psychoanalysis will never do. The Word of God opens the soul. It penetrates. It breaks up the heart. It reveals. It is sufficient to penetrate the deepest part of a person's soul.

And I take exception to those who would deny the Word of God that which God gives it, and that is the power to penetrate deeper than anything else. I believe to say that the Bible, the Word of the living God cannot deal with a problem is to sin against God. Can there be more sufficiency than the mind of Christ and the Word of the living God?

Jesus also said, and this in Luke 11:28, "Blessed is the one who hears the Word of God and keeps it, or obeys it." Luke 11:28. Now what did He say by that? What He said was, all spiritual sufficiency is bound up in hearing and obeying the Word of God...hearing and obeying the Word of God.

What does the word "blessed" mean? Well, I think we think of the word "blessed" as sort of a little tingle, a little momentary excitement. The concept of "blessed" means a blissful state of life...a blissful state of life, that is life with peace and joy, life with meaning and value, life with hope and fulfillment, life with happiness. A fulfilled and happy and meaningful blissful life belongs to those who hear the Word of God and obey it. And that, dear friend, is the testimony of the lips of Jesus. Obedience to God's Word is the door to sufficiency. It's a door to a blissful life. It's the answer.

I've occasion the last couple of weeks to speak with a woman twice, once in person with her and once on the phone. She has a terminal disease. She's near death and she's a very dear and precious lady. She told me, she said, "I'm absolutely living in fear...I am so afraid."

I said, "Why are you afraid?"
She said, "I'm afraid that I won't go to heaven."
I said, "But, you believe the gospel, don't you?"
"Yes."
"And you've committed your life to Christ?"
"Yes."
"And your deepest desire is to obey Him?"
"Yes."
"And you love Him?"
"Yes."
"Well, what are you afraid of?"
"Well, when I first got this disease, I cursed God and I'm afraid that He can't forgive me and He won't forgive me and I'm going to go to hell for what I did. I did a terrible, terrible thing. I spoke to God and I used profane words."

Now what are you going to say to a person like that on the edge of death? I mean, that death is maybe days away. "Well, you need...that's a very deep problem, you need some analysis." Or, "You better bind the demon of doubt. So I've got to get the formula so you can do that." Or, "You better visualize, just visualize yourself in heaven...just..." Well, that's what's being advocated today and we laugh at that but that's pretty serious stuff with some people.

No, you know what you say to someone like that? First I said, "Let me quote you a passage of Scripture, even if you did that...even if you did that, cursed God. There was someone who cursed God even more than you did, his name was the Apostle Paul who was a blasphemer." And I quoted her 1 Timothy 1:12 and following, how Paul says the Lord counted me faithful having put me into the ministry who before was a blasphemer and injurious and he says that there's one thing I know for sure, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. And I pointed out to her that the reason Paul gave that testimony as being the chief sinner was that he might be set forth as an example to the whole world that if God could save the chief sinner, He can save all the lesser ones, too. And I said, "God saved the worst blasphemer on the face of the earth who fought against Jesus Christ Himself, who persecuted and killed His beloved saints and if He can forgive him, He can forgive you."

There was great hope in her voice. And then on the earlier occasion, I had gone over the Scripture passages that talk about the complete forgiveness that belongs to believers. You see, the answer for someone in that kind of anxiety is simply to open to them the Word of the living God which they believe and which when read and heard is energized in them by the living Spirit of God. There's no insufficiency there. And even for someone on the edge of death, there can be a blissful life if there is the confidence in the Word of the living God.

James also gives testimony to the sufficiency of Scripture. James says, "The one who obeys the Word of God," and he calls it, I love this, "the perfect law." What does "perfect" mean? What's another word for "perfect?" Complete. The complete law...is it incomplete? Is the Bible incomplete? Not hardly. In fact, at the end it says, "If you add anything to this, shall be added to you the plagues that are written in it." No, the Bible is the complete law. James 1:25, the perfect law...beautiful thought. He calls it the "royal law" in the second chapter...the perfect law. And he says anyone who obeys the perfect law, James 1:25, shall be blessed. Again, bliss, satisfaction, fulfillment, all that pertains to life and conduct for a believer is bound up in the Word of God. Our spiritual sufficiency comes from God, is ministered from the Word of God by the Spirit to the heart of a believer.

Listen to the testimony of Luke in writing the book of Acts. Luke identified the most noble Christians in Greece. They were in a little town called Berea. And this is what he said, "The saints in Berea were the most noble of all the saints," quote, Acts 17:11, "Because they received the Word with readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily." What a great statement. Spiritual nobility belongs to those

who receive the Word of God with readiness of mind. What does that mean? With acceptance, with faith, with eagerness. They received the Word of God and they searched the Scriptures every day. Beloved, the key to adequate living is not the Bible plus a lot of stuff, it is the Word of God pursued with readiness and eagerness and searched out every day of one's life. It's a daily diet...a daily diet.

And I don't think we approach spiritual life like that at all. We get ourselves into problems, we assume the problems are beyond the purview and the capability of the Word of God because we're really not into the daily application of the Word of God. Noble spirituality is tied to a daily study of the Word of God. That's where the strength comes to deal with life. And that's where the sufficiency lies. People sadly who are finding their sufficiency...chasing their sufficiency, not finding it, but chasing it in psychology and in this sort of science of the mind and mysticism and ecstatic experiences and the supernatural and in entertainment and management techniques for the church, all of that pursuit is running the wrong direction. And instead of bringing what they think they need and what they think they're going to get, it will bring them the very opposite...the very opposite.

In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul identifies the key to a happy life. Listen to this. The key to a happy life, the key to a joyous heart, would you like to have a joyous heart? Happy life? Would you like to have a singing spirit, just singing all the time because you're so happy? A good relationships with everybody? An absolutely rich and stable marriage? A totally fulfilling family life and rewarding employment? I mean, that's it, folks. Everything...everything-- Colossians 3:16--depends on this one phrase, "Letting the Word of Christ dwell in you...what?...richly." That's it. And out of that flow all those other things. Get them again...a happy life, a joyous heart, a singing spirit, good relationships, a rich stable marriage, fulfilling family life, and satisfying employment. It's all bound up in letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.

You say, "You mean the Bible alone can provide all that?" Of course, that's what it's for...the ticket to the Spirit-filled life is the Word controlled-mind..the Word-controlled mind which leads to sufficiency and adequacy.

Listen to the words of Peter in 1 Peter 2:2. "As babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow by it." Spiritual growth, spiritual maturity, spiritual strength, the maturation process, moving toward Christlikeness is tied to your desire for the Word of God. You will grow by the Word of God. And growing is really developing the strength to deal with difficulty. And you do that by feeding on the Word of God. A baby grows by drinking milk. And that's what Peter is saying. Peter is saying that as a baby desires milk, with that same singular devotion, that same strong singular desire, and we all know how much a baby wants milk, that's the way a believer should long for the Word of God. When your heart seeks that and desires that on a daily basis, you'll find spiritual strength. The Word provides all the spiritual resource for strengthening.

And then Peter added this in his second epistle, 2 Peter 1:3, one of the great statements on this subject in all of Scripture, he says, "According as God's divine power has given unto us...listen to this...all things that pertain unto life and godliness." What a statement! God's divine power has given us, not some things, but all things that pertain to life and godliness. Then he says, "Through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue." When we come to know Him and He is revealed through His Word, we are cashing in on the resources that allow us to be able to face anything. We have all things that pertain to life and godliness. Beloved, all we need for life, all we need for godliness, all we need in all of our Christian living is bound up in the Word of God. And you ask yourself, why do you always teach the Bible? Why do we always study the Word of God? Because where else do we go for spiritual sufficiency? Everything else is superfluous. For the matter at hand through the knowledge of Him, through the knowledge of Him who called us and He reveals Himself in His Word, comes all we need for life and godliness. And I tell you, it grieves me no end when people come up with this idea that the Bible is not enough and we've got to study all this other stuff and gain all these other techniques in order to tap necessary resources. The Word of God energized by the Spirit of God is sufficient for life and godliness.

Now even more direct and comprehensive is the statement of Paul in the book of Acts in chapter 20. When he was meeting with the Ephesian elders, this is an interesting statement, he said to them, reciting a little bit of the history of his ministry, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." I gave you everything profitable. Now he didn't hold anything back. He gave them everything that was profitable. And they were just like us, they had all the problems we have. They had all the life struggles we have. They had all the spiritual needs we have. He said, "I didn't hold anything back that was profitable, but I have shown you and I have taught you." And what he's saying is, comprehensively I've given you everything that was profitable. That's in verse 20 of chapter 20.

Then down in verse 27 he tells us what that was. "I have not failed to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Not all the counsel of God and some of the counsel of men. He saw in the revelation of God, total sufficiency. And then later on to them, in verse 32, he says, "So I commend you to God and the Word of His grace which is able to build you up."

Is it sufficient? Is the Bible sufficient to build us up? Is it sufficient to meet every vicissitude, struggle, need and anxiety of human life? Of course it is. And anyone that says it isn't, whether by explicit statement or by implication, sins a sin against God, for he calls God a liar. And that's no small act but indeed an act of serious treachery. No, he says I commend you to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified. The Word is all you need. The Word is what is profitable. The Word will strengthen.

To the Colossians, Paul gave a statement that we ought to all remember. Colossians 2:3, "In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." I didn't say that, he said that. That's unqualified. Everything you need to know about wisdom and knowledge, you find in Christ. So no

believer should be looking elsewhere. In verse 4 of Colossians 2, he says, "Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." Don't let the world beguile you with their enticing words, "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ." And we are, he says in verse 7, "Rooted and built up in Him." We were rooted in Him and we're going to built up in Him. It's almost like Paul's word to the Galatians, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you going to be perfected in the flesh?" No. You were rooted in Him and you'll be built up in Him and established in the faith as you've been taught it, out of the Word. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in the Christ who is revealed in the Word. And therefore he says in that same chapter, verse 8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and empty deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world," that is the philosophies and ideas of the world, "and not after Christ for-- verse 10 says--you're complete in Him. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and you're complete in Him." So stay away from human philosophy, it cannot speak to spiritual matters. It can speak to some things and it can be helpful in the practical aspects of living. But when it comes to the spiritual dimension and the needs of the heart and the soul and in the mind of man at their deepest level, for those of us who know God, only God provides our sufficiency through His Word.

John adds a very strong testimony to the testimony of Peter and Paul and James and Luke and Jesus and others. Listen to what John says in 1 John 2:20, "But you have an anointing from the Holy One...listen to this...and you know all things." What a statement! What do you mean "all things"? Well, not all things that there are to know in the whole universe and not even all things that there are to know in the whole world, but all things that there are to know in relation to your spiritual life. You know everything. You know all you need to know. How? "You have an anointing from the Holy One." The "Holy One" is God, the anointing is the Holy Spirit. You have the Word of God and the Spirit of God and you know all things. What a statement!

And he affirms that Christians know the truth by revelation in God's Word in verse 21. And then in verse 27, he says, "So you need not that any man should teach you." We don't need it. We know all things by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

First Thessalonians chapter 2, I want you to turn to this verse. First Thessalonians 2:13, this is a powerful statement in behalf of the adequacy of Scripture. If you'll look in verse 11 of 1 Thessalonians 2, he says that we exhorted you and encouraged you and commanded every one of you as a father does his children. In other words, we wanted you to behave yourselves in a way that would be honoring to God. We wanted you, verse 12, to walk worthy of God who called you. And so we encouraged you and encouraged you. So Paul is saying, "Look, we really wanted you to get your life together and live the way you ought to live and have all the resources you need it." And then in verse 13, "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men." It isn't the word of men, it isn't anything like the word of men. "But as it is in truth, the Word of God." Stop there for a moment. He said, "You received the Word of God as the Word of God." Then he adds, "Which effectually works

also in you that believe." It works...it...literally it performs its work in you who believe.

Now listen to me. There is a work and it is the work of maturing, of strengthening, of building, a work of growth, a work of bringing you into Christlikeness, that work is a work that only can be done by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. And it will perform its work, you committed yourselves, he commends them, to the Word of God, not as if it were the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God and it is doing its work in you. And the work it does is indeed sufficient.

Job, the testimony of Job, the noble saint, what an inspiring testimony he gives to the Word of God and its sufficiency. Here is a man who lost everything. The devil came, took away everything. Took away all of his possessions, his land, his crops, his animals, took away his family in terrible death, took away his own health...a man in absolute deprivation and destitution. In chapter 23 verse 12 he says, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips." I didn't stop obeying His Word...I didn't stop obeying His Word. "I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food," he says. What a statement. The Word of God has a higher priority to me than eating.

How about you? People struggle with all kinds of problems in life and it may be something as basic as what's the priority of your life? Do you like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures every day? Like Job, is it more important for you to feed on the Word of God than it is on earthly food? And what do you esteem most highly? Do you esteem most highly your own comfort, or do you esteem the Word of God most highly? Do you...is it self-esteem you're after, or is it the esteem of the Word of God? Oh, if only people could come back to this very basic reality. We get into problems, emotional problems, because we focus on ourselves rather than on the Word of the living God. He esteemed the words of the mouth of God more important than anything in his life and that's why he could endure what he endured. And at the end, give God the glory.

I want you to look to one other Old Testament passage. Turn in your Bible to Deuteronomy chapter 6 and then one passage from our Lord after that, and we'll give a final word from Paul. In Deuteronomy 6, we have the basic doctrinal statement of Israel. Verse 4, "The Lord our God is one Lord and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might." That was substantially the bottom line truth of all theology in the land of Israel and among God's people. That was what God wanted them to know.

Now that wasn't all there was. That was the summary of the law. That was the summary of it. The Lord our God is one Lord, but there were many other things true about Him also. This summed it up. "And you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." That was a simple way to express a myriad of commands that God laid down. But all the law was reduced and summarized to this, the Word of God then is the key, "And these words...he says in verse 6...the law of God, the revealed Word of God which I command you this day shall be in your heart and you shall teach them unto your children and talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the

way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes, and you shall write them on the posts of your house and on your gates."

In other words, you take the Word of God and you teach it to your children and you talk about it when you stand up, sit down, lie down, walk in the way. Write it on your hand. Write it on your head. Write it on your door. Write it on your gates. Everywhere you go, you are always aware of the Word of the living God. This is the key to living. This is God's design for life, given to His people. The Scripture was sufficient. It was to occupy all their attention as the source of everything.

And then a most fascinating and somewhat familiar passage in Luke 16, where our Lord gives His testimony to the sufficiency of Scripture. In Luke 16, Jesus tells of Lazarus, the beggar, full of sores and the rich man. You remember Lazarus died and went to Abraham's bosom, the place of blessing. The rich man died and went to the fire and he was tormented. And the rich man said, "I don't want my brothers to come here. Oh, I don't want my brothers to come here." Verse 28, "I have five brothers," Luke 16, "I need to go and tell them, lest they come to this place of torment. And Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." They have Moses and the prophets, that's the Word of God, let them read the Word of God. "Oh, he said, No, father Abraham, if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." I mean, that is spectacular evangelism. "I have just come from hell and I want to tell you, don't go there." That's heavy stuff. If I could just come back from here and preach, they would repent. That is the view of the...of these who seek the supernatural affirmation. The simple gospel is not enough. We've got to have signs and wonders and resurrections or we'll never be able to convince people.

And verse 31, Jesus who could raise the dead and who did rise from the dead and proved his own point, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," and He was living proof of that. You don't need miracles. Why? Because the Word of God is powerful enough. The sufficiency of Scripture....O, it is sufficient. It is all sufficient in relation to all matters of the soul of man in relation to God and in relation to fellow man. The key, of course, is to believe it and obey it...to study it. We've been saying that for years and say it again happily...happily.

Is the Bible sufficient? One final passage sums it all up. Second Timothy 3, 2 Timothy 3, listen to this testimony. I'm not even going to say much about it, just let it speak. Second Timothy 3:15 is a great...in fact, the greatest single New Testament testimony to the sufficiency of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:15, "That from a child...Paul says to Timothy...you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Listen, are the Scriptures sufficient to save? That's right. They are sufficient to save. Nothing more is needed. You have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation.

Further, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness." Listen to that. The Scripture provides doctrine, all the teaching we need...reproof, correction, reproof meaning "stop doing that," correction meaning "start doing this." And instruction in righteousness, taking it a step further. It can turn people around to the right path. But how sufficient is it? Look at the last verse, verse 17. "That the man of God may be...what?...perfect, complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." What a comprehensive statement.

Is it sufficient? Yes, the Bible is sufficient to make you wise unto salvation. It is sufficient to give you the doctrine, the reproof, the correction, and the instruction needed for righteousness. It is sufficient to make a man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, lacks nothing. The Word of God, absolutely sufficient.

Some years back, Maud Frazier Jackson wrote these words, listen to them. "What if I say the Bible is God's holy Word, complete, inspired without a flaw? But let its pages stay unread from day to day and fail to learn there from God's law. What if I go not there to seek the truth of which I glibly speak for guidance in this earthly way? Does it matter what I say?" Potent words. And the answer is no, it doesn't matter. You can say you believe it all you want, but if you do not study it, if you do not go there to seek the truth of which you glibly speak, then it doesn't matter what you say. The Word is to be believed and to be obeyed and therein is the sufficiency. Let's bow in prayer.

We thank You, our Father, for this day You've given us to worship. And we know that You have said Yourself that I have exalted My Word above all My name and if You are sufficient and You are, then Your Word must be sufficient as well. Thank You for a complete Bible that leaves nothing out. The truths of which can bring us to a perfect man thoroughly furnished to all good works, the truth of which can bring us a blessedness of life in every dimension. Father, save Your church from the heinous sin of believing we have an insufficient Bible.

And, Lord, we pray for every need of every life today, that the sufficiency of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit of God might be applied to every life, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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